

Montana Productions + Staples Music

Mavis Staples
PO Box 498360
Chicago, IL 60649

December 8, 2009

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Gergosian and Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

I write to urge you to continue supporting the International Festival of Arts & Ideas in New Haven and to avoid any change in funding that would jeopardize this important national asset.

As an artist who has traveled around the world to appear in many international venues, I can tell you that you have an important Festival there with a reputation for professionalism and integrity. It is a credit to your community and your State.

When I came to New Haven to kick off the Festival in 2008, we met with an unexpected thunderstorm that caused the cancellation of our performance. We were heartbroken to have fans disappointed and not be able to perform. But the Festival came through in a bigger way for us and for the 10,000 folks in the audience who came to see us. In 2009 the Festival not only invited us back to play a free show to a packed audience on the New Haven Green but I also had the opportunity to talk with the poet Elizabeth Alexander about my life and the experiences of my family during the Civil Rights movement.

The Festival's extraordinary dedication, vision and commitment to provide an outlet for artistic expression and building community is unique. It celebrates art and our ideas of a shared heritage in a very special way. Your continued support of this Festival means a lot to me and so many other artists.

I want to personally thank you for standing up for this Festival in the past. And I urge you to continue your commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mavis Staples". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Mavis" written in a cursive-like script and "Staples" in a more straightforward but still cursive style.

Mavis Staples